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ABSTRACT

The role of professional associations in facilitating minority access to graduate and professional education is addressed. Information on minority applications, financial aid, recruitment, and support activities was requested from 29 associations; 16 responded. The general posture of the associations appears to be limited to expressions of support for resolutions of affirmative action in hiring and admissions. Data on minority enrollment was limited and sometimes conflicting. The best and most timely information came from law and medical associations. The problem of certification and credentialing are explored: often it is currently assumed that if a minority individual is certified it is because the standards were lowered, or because of special treatment. It is suggested that associations could play a vital role in disseminating information on successful programs, and that their participation would increase minority participation in academic training. It is stressed that the passive role which associations have played in minority participation is not adequate, that they have a responsibility to actively lead in the promotion of minority involvement in academic and professional training. (PHR)

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# MINORITY STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

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# MINORITY STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS*

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Professional associations could play a critical role in facilitating minority access to graduate and professional education. In many academic and professional fields, general philosophy and policy towards recruitment, admissions, curriculum, and certification are established, or at least influenced, and are often monitored by the national association. Many associations have a visibility which extends beyond academe: statements made by association executives can be perceived by the general public to represent the views of all individuals in a particular field, rather than just the membership. Perhaps even more important, at least for academic organizations, is that faculty in many fields are strongly oriented towards their discipline, in many cases more so than towards their institutions: faculty tend to compare their programs with others in their particular field, rather than with others in their particular institution. For these reasons alone, academic and professional associations represent a major potential influence on minority access to and participation in postbaccalaureate education.

One indication of association interest in minority participation in higher education is the number of amicus briefs filed by academic and professional organizations in the Bakke case. Nine academic/professional groups filed briefs: The American Association of University Professors, the American Bar Association, the American Public Health Association, the

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Association of American Law Schools, the Association of American Medical Schools, the National Bar Association, the National Education Association, and the National Medical Association filed briefs in support of the position of the University of California; the American Federation of Teachers filed a brief supporting Allan Bakke ("Briefs in the Bakke Case," 1977).

Because a number of associations did express an interest in the Bakke case, the Higher Education Research Institute decided to examine (1) the role played by professional groups in developing and promoting policies and procedures intended to increase minority opportunities, and (2) the data possessed by various associations on minority enrollments and membership. This work was conducted as part of a larger study of the Bakke case and its policy implications (Astin, Fuller, and Green, 1978). In the Spring of 1978, prior to the resolution of the Bakke case by the U.S. Supreme Court, letters were mailed to twenty-nine academic and professional associations requesting the following information:

1. Data on minority student applications, admissions, and enrollments;
2. Information about special financial aid programs for minority students;
3. Data on minority student persistence, graduation, and (if appropriate) certification rates;
4. Information about special recruitment activities coordinated by tne association, individual institutions, or individual departments;
5. Information about special support services or training programs designed for or oriented towards minority or disadvantaged students.

Sixteen of the twenty-nine associations (55 percent) responded to the inquiry. What follows here is a report of the responses received and a

discussion of the activities and strategies open to organizations interested in increasing minority access to and participation in various academic and professional fields.

General Association Posture Towards Affirmative Action

Although we found a range of association involvement in affirmative action, minority-oriented activities, it appears that the activities of most groups are limited to expressions of support for resolutions of Affirmative Action in admissions and in hiring. The responses received suggest that the most active organizations are those in law and medicine, followed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and several other scientific organizations. The various social science organizations report a range of activity; those disciplines involved in training "human-service" professionals appear to be the most active. The humanities organizations appear to have the least involvement of all associations surveyed. Although the three humanities associations contacted did respond to the inquiry, two indicated that they had none of the information requested, and the third had only limited information about the racial/ethnic composition of its membership.

Data Collection

Any useful discussion of minority participation and progress in academe requires accurate data: consensual or impressionistic analysis of minority progress has little value. For this reason, the little available data about minority participation in graduate and professional education makes it difficult to assess the gains made by minority groups during the past decade. Enrollment counts of minority students from the Office of Civil

Rights, the Census Bureau, the National Center for Educational Statistics, the National Research Council, and other sources, while indicating increased minority participation, present conflicting or at times ambiguous results (McNamara, 1978). A recent and vivid example of some of the difficulties plaguing minority data is provided by the National Research Council's annual survey of doctoral degree recipients (National Research Council, 1978). For the years 1974-1976, the Council tallied separately the responses of Mexican-Americans and Puerto Rican Americans; in the 1977 survey, the Council changed its procedures and identified "Hispanic" recipients, merging these two groups and including other respondents, many of whom would have previously classified themselves as black, white, or other. Unless the Council returns to its earlier classification scheme (one more consistent with that employed by other federal agencies) any accurate assessment of Chicano and Puerto-Rican participation in graduate education will be extremely difficult. In a similar vein, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1978, pp. 92-93) expressed concern about the quality and the management of Federal statistical data regarding minorities, "including the responsiveness of data to policy needs."

The law school and the medical school associations have the best and most timely data on application rates, enrollments, and first year admissions, and on the racial composition of their active membership. A number of factors contribute to this: 1) applications are processed through central clearinghouses, making it possible for the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) to monitor applications; 2) law and medicine are the most prominent professions, and therefore most vulnerable to demands for accountability -- as such, their need for timely data to support claims of minority progress may be greater

than that of other fields; and 3) the "new vocationalism" among undergraduates, while affecting most graduate and professional fields, has probably had its greatest impact on law and medicine, where the competition is for admission into any school, rather than a school, as is the case for all but the few most selective graduate programs. Because most other academic and professional areas do not process applications through a central clearinghouse, the kinds and quality of data available are not comparable. For example, while the majority of graduate school applicants take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Graduate Record Examination Board (GREB) does not have data on which of those examinees actually apply and matriculate: its data describes the testtakers rather than the actual applicants and enrollees. Data from law and medical school applications indicate that the number of examinees is not the same as the number of applicants. The flow of law school admissions for the 1975-76 academic year provides a vivid illustration of the "drop-off" (American Bar Association, 1978; Evans, 1977):

-- 133,546 Law School Admissions Tests (LSAT) were administered (tests, rather than testtakers is the measure here as undoubtably some persons took the LSAT more than once);

-- 105,975 persons registered (paid the registration fee) for the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS), the application clearinghouse. (146 of the 157 American Bar Association (ABA) accredited law schools require LSDAS processed applications);

-- 82,243 persons completed the LSDAS registration process (transcript and valid LSAT score);

-- 39,996 new first year students started law school during the 1976-77 academic year.

Data from the AAMC's Division of Educational Research (1978; Gordon, 1978) provides a similar portrait of 1978 medical school applicants:

-- 56,586 Medical College Admission Tests (MCAT) were administered in the 1977 application year (11.7 percent of the tests were taken by individuals who took the exam the two times it was administered during the 1977 application year);

-- 40,569 persons completed applications (valid MCAT score and completed data assembly service file);

-- 15,977 new first-year students were admitted into medical school for the 1978-79 academic year.

The "fall-out" rate from test to application to matriculation in other fields is not known, although it seems likely that it would mirror the data in law and medicine, with some variation among fields.

Regular association sponsored surveys of graduate departments and the association membership could be a source of much useful and needed information. Such surveys could provide more and better information about minority participation, as manifested by application, acceptance, matriculation, attrition, graduation, membership, and faculty appointment data. The benefits of such data extend beyond a department or an association's affirmative action efforts: given the current state of the academic employment market, and more generally, the market for highly-trained personnel (Breneman, 1975; Cartter, 1976; Freeman, 1971, 1976; Solmon, Ochsner, and Hurwicz, 1978), such data might facilitate efforts to deal with the projected abundance of "overtrained and underemployed" graduates of American universities. The availability of current enrollment data by discipline, e.g., philosophy, physics, psychology, rather than by general field, e.g., humanities, physical and social sciences, as is generally the current situation would facilitate

departmental, institutional, and association efforts to assess and respond to the current issues facing graduate and professional education. Clearly minorities need not be the sole focus of such an activity, although they would certainly be among the beneficiaries.

Credentialing and Certification

Those professional associations which are engaged in certifying practitioners have a special responsibility. Much of the public clamor surrounding the issues raised by the DeFunis and Bakke cases has been based on the supposition that "underqualified" or "unqualified" minority students have been admitted into highly competitive professional programs. Green and McNamara (1978) report that minority students, although confident of their own professional skills, anticipate living with the stigma of having been a "beneficiary" of special programs and special treatment. Relevant to the student reports, black faculty on white campuses report that "whereas in the past you were viewed as outstanding...that in spite of discrimination... you were making it...now there is this feeling that if you're a student or on the faculty, you're here because of Affirmative Action; you're here because they lowered their standards" (Middleton, 1978, p. 9). Confidence in the quality of training received by all students and professional competence of all practitioners can be maintained only if the public is convinced that all students, regardless of the status of their admission into a program, are subject to consistent and uniformly applied certifying and credentialing examinations and procedures. The skills required for competent professional performance know no color or ethnicity: the public must be convinced that those individuals responsible for certifying professionals in various fields, be they professors evaluating the classroom,

clinical, and field performance of students, or members of state licensing boards for the major professions, require all individuals to meet the same and uniformly applied standards of the profession.

Special Programs

A number of associations sponsor special programs or offer special services which are intended to increase minority participation. As was the case with data collection, the organizations representing law and medical schools, followed by some of the scientific associations, are the most active in this realm. None of the humanities associations reported special minority-oriented enrichment or support programs, although some institutions and private foundations do provide support for minority students interested in graduate work in the humanities. In the social sciences, special minority-oriented programs appear to exist in those areas concerned with training human-service professionals. Those fields in which practitioners have professional contact with minority clients seem most likely to have developed some type of outreach program, or at least seem likely to express sensitivity to the issue of minority participation. Client demand for service and accountability, including the labor force demands of potential employers seeking minority personnel, will be a significant influence on the posture taken towards minority participation.

Existing programs appear to be promoted. The American Association for the Advancement of Science has published an inventory of minority-oriented science programs, Programs in Science for Minority Students, 1960-1975 (Malcolm, Cownie, and Brown, 1976). The American Chemical Society's Project SEED (Subcommittee for the Employment and Education of the Disadvantaged) runs support programs for disadvantaged high school students with an interest

in the sciences. The American Society for Engineering Education, working with the Committee on Minorities in Engineering, is coordinating a national program to increase minority participation in the profession with the financial support of the National Advisory Council on Minorities in Engineering; in engineering, as is the case with other fields, support for these special programs, including funding, comes from individual academic institutions, professional associations, philanthropic foundations, and private industry.

Some of the social science associations sponsor special programs for undergraduates interested in graduate or professional education. The American Economics Association's summer program for disadvantaged and minority students provides special classes with distinguished scholars. A number of the social science associations have special fellowship programs for minority students.

The major professional education and testing organizations provide a number of special services for minority students interested in graduate and professional programs. The Association of American Medical Colleges sponsors the Medical Minority Applicant Registry (MED-MAR), which enables minority students to have basic biographical information distributed to all American medical schools. Educational Testing Service, through its various testing programs and organizational affiliations, provides a number of minority-oriented services: The Law School Admissions Council which supervises the LSAT, and the Graduate Record Examination Board, which administers the GRE, both offer referral services to assist institutions identify and recruit minority students. Similar services are available to college-bound students through the Admissions Testing Program (ATP) of the College Entrance Examination Board. The American Dental Association distributes to all dental schools a list of minority students who

have taken the Dental School Admissions Test.

Minority enrollments will not increase, however, as the result of a new program or new admissions procedures, or because of resolutions supporting affirmative action. Effective minority-oriented programs, be they admissions, recruitment, or support services, recognize that there are a number of component parts which create the total educational environment and educational system. As such, programs which are likely to be most successful are those which approach the issue of minority participation in a systematic manner, identifying the various input, throughput, and output components, and the problems which need to be resolved at each stage (see, for example, Elliott, 1978, pp. 70-74, and Willard, 1978, pp. 21-50).

Associations could play a vital role in disseminating information about successful programs. Our survey of professional associations and an earlier survey of admissions procedures (Fuller, McNamara, and Green, 1978) suggest that departments or institutions seldom exchange information regarding minority-oriented programs, admissions and recruitment procedures, or support services. Association publications, particularly newsletters, could be an effective vehicle for disseminating information about such programs: if effective programs are to be developed and sustained, information about both successful as well as unsuccessful programs must be made available. Successful programs should be promoted as models while data about unsuccessful programs would help departments and institutions avoid repeating costly (in terms of both funds as well as morale) and time-consuming errors.

Responses to our survey of associations, and, perhaps more importantly, the responses not received, suggest that academic and professional associations could assume a much larger role in promoting activities and pol-

icies which would increase minority participation in academic and professional training and life. Resolutions supporting affirmative action in admissions and in hiring will not automatically result in increased minority participation; rather, resolutions must be accompanied by a real commitment, as manifested by specific activities such as data collection, program funding, research, and dissemination. We were puzzled by the response of one subcommittee chairman who wrote to us seeking to clarify materials sent by another association officer: the chairman wrote that his association did "not attempt to collect data on...minorities" stating that "by the time a student embarks on a graduate career...it is assumed that he will have reached a point through his undergraduate training where he can be admitted (into a program) based on his academic achievement." To what extent this attitude is shared by other officers of this association, or by faculty and officers in other associations we do not know, but it suggests that minority participation may not always be perceived as being an issue which requires association attention. Our survey suggests that most associations have assumed a somewhat passive role in expanding options and opportunities for minority students. There seems to be no necessary reason why these associations could not assume a much more active leadership role in promoting minority participation in academic and professional training.

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